

COUNTY: DORSET            SITE NAME: LIONS HILL

DISTRICT: WIMBORNE

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Local Planning Authority: WIMBORNE DISTRICT COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SU 106040            Area: 42.9 (ha.) 106.0 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195            1:10,000: SU 10 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –            Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985            Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new Site

Reasons for Notification:

This heathland area lies to the east of the Moors River. Its varied plant communities, which include dry and wet heath, bog, pine and birch woodland have a rich associated fauna, including species of restricted distribution.

Dry heathland covers the higher ground, and is dominated by Ling *Calluna vulgaris* with Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Dwarf Gorse *Ulex minor*. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Common Gorse *Ulex europaeus* are locally frequent. There are more extensive areas of humid heath with Ling and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and abundant lichens of the genus *Cladonia*, especially *C. portentosa*. The wet heath is largely dominated by Cross-leaved Heath with Deer-grass *Trichophorum cespitosum*, the beak-sedges, *Rhynchospora alba* and the rare *R. fusca* and Cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. There are several species of *Sphagnum* moss including *S. compactum*, *S. tenellum*, *S. papillosum* and *S. cuspidatum*, the latter the major vegetation of several small pools. In certain wet locations, Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* is dominant and forms dense tall tussocks. Associated species here are Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale*, Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and an uncommon naturalised species, the cranberry *Vaccinium macrocarpon*.

Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* woodland has invaded some of the dry and humid heathland and is most mature on Lions Hill itself. Birch *Betula pubescens* woodland has developed over *Molinia*-dominated wet heath in certain parts of the site. Here sallow *Salix cinerea* and Bog Myrtle are typical of the edges. Broad Buckler fern *Dryopteris austriaca* is very frequent and the mosses *Sphagnum fimbriatum*, *Polytrichum commune*, *Mnium hornum* and *Dicranella heteromalla* are abundant.

The fauna comprises animals typical of a varied area of Dorset heathland and includes the rare reptiles, Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* and Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*,

which are virtually confined to heathland in southern England. Heath Grasshopper *Chorthippus vagans*, a rare insect found only in Dorset and the New Forest, also occurs here. Lions Hill represents a small fragment of the once continuous heathland tract from Cranborne through Hurn Common to Christchurch. Despite the great reduction in size, Lions Hill and the other remaining heathland fragments still form an important habitat link between the heathlands of the New Forest and Purbeck and their invertebrate fauna is intermediate in character.